

## HISTORIC AND CULTURAL PRESERVATION

### Overview

During the past 50 years, the Evans & Rosedale District has suffered the loss of much of its historic fabric as residents moved away. However, the existing building stock of the Near Southeast neighborhood is currently being evaluated for historic district designation on the National Register of Historic Places. National Register listing would encourage current and potential owners to reinvest in the area's building stock and inform the public of the historic importance of the district. Additionally, the documentation of structures in the District will help in deciding which structures should receive the highest priority in being incorporated into future redevelopment efforts. Targeting the redevelopment of the more historically and architecturally significant buildings will preserve and enhance the district's significance in African-American history.

The community planning process spearheaded by the Evans & Rosedale Advisory Committee explored opportunities to preserve

the historic character of the area and showcase the district's unique cultural importance to the African-American community.

### Historic Structures

The existing building stock gives an impression of what businesses once existed in the district. Prior to 1950, businesses located on Evans Avenue included grocery stores, dry cleaning establishments, restaurants, a hotel, beauty and barber shops, a pharmacy, and a branch of the Fort Worth Public Library. Several buildings of historic prominence are located near the southern end of the District along Evans Avenue: Mount Zion Baptist Church and Our Mother of Mercy Catholic Church (now Sunshine Cumberland Presbyterian Church). The latter building and the adjacent parsonage, located at 1100 and 1104 Evans Avenue, were listed on the National Register in 1999. Evans & Rosedale was also home to the school associated with Our Mother of Mercy Catholic Church. This building later housed the Tommy Tucker daycare center.

The District's remaining structures provide a glimpse of this district's once vibrant role as

*Proposed National Register Historic District*



- Proposed National Register Historic District Boundaries
- Heritage Center Boundaries

*The creation of a National Register Historic District in Near Southeast Fort Worth would encourage current and potential owners to reinvest in the area's building stock and inform the public of the historic importance of the district. (Source: Planning Department, 2000)*

a place where Near Southeast residents lived, worked, learned, and worshiped. The older housing stock, commercial buildings, and key landmarks make up the remaining historic fabric. Their contribution to the historic and architectural character of the district strongly influences how they could be reused and renovated.



*Located at 1108 Evans Avenue is a one story bungalow-style house. This type of house was commonly built in the area.*

**Housing stock.** The existing housing in the District area was mostly built between 1900 and 1930. These houses are typically small, one-story frame buildings constructed in the Bungalow, Folk Victorian, and National Folk styles. Although not highly ornamented, they are good representations of the popular styles of the day. Some of the houses have been modified by the enclosure of porches or the application of new siding.

**Commercial buildings.** Several of the historic commercial buildings along Evans Avenue were constructed in the 1920s. These buildings typically were one-story brick structures with flat roofs and prominent storefront windows. The most elaborate of these buildings is located at 951-953 Evans Avenue, now home to the Compassionate Church of God in Christ. In the past, Keep U Neat Cleaners had a business in the northern portion of the building, while the southern portion of the building housed Mrs. Dalton's Mayonnaise Company and then the Lullaby Diaper Service.



*The Compassionate Church of God in Christ now occupies this former commercial building located at 951-953 Evans Avenue.*

Neighborhood-scaled commercial row buildings were also built to serve the needs of the community. The building at 900-02 Evans Avenue, directly across the street from the Compassionate Church of God in Christ, was a Piggly Wiggly Grocery Store. Other tenants included a Safeway Store and a candy company. The building is currently vacant. At the corner of Evans Avenue and Verbena Street is a commercial building that is now occupied by the Fort Worth Branch of the NAACP. It's original tenants were barber shops, beauty parlors and other businesses.



*The Fort Worth branch of the NAACP is located at 1059 Evans Avenue. Barber shops and beauty parlors were among its original tenants.*

**Landmarks.** Three structures, including two historically significant churches, are landmarks in the area. The congregation of Mount Zion Baptist Church organized in 1894. Between 1919 and 1921, the church



***Located at 1101 Evans Avenue, Mt. Zion Baptist Church, built between 1919-21, is an important neighborhood cornerstone to Fort Worth's African-American community.***

building was constructed at 1101 Evans Avenue. It is a two-story polychrome brick building with prominent entrances featuring full height Ionic columns on the west and north elevations. A metal dome crowns the building, making it very visible from several blocks away.

Opposite Mt. Zion is Our Mother of Mercy/Sunshine Cumberland Presbyterian Church. Our Mother of Mercy was organized specifically for African-Americans. The church, located at 1100 Evans Avenue, was designed by the congregation's priest, Father N.P. Denis, and built by the parishioners in 1929.



***At 1100 Evans Avenue, the Sunshine Cumberland Presbyterian Church was formerly Our Mother of Mercy, a Catholic Church organized specifically for African-Americans.***

This front gable brick building features a two-story bell-tower at the southeast corner.

Northwest of the church at 801 Verbena Street is the Tommy Tucker school building, once the location of Our Mother of Mercy School. This one-story brick building also was designed by Father Denis and built by church members in 1931. The building sits on a raised basement and has large window openings on the first floor. Pediment-shaped parapets are located on three sides of the building. The building is in need of immediate structural attention as it is open to the elements.

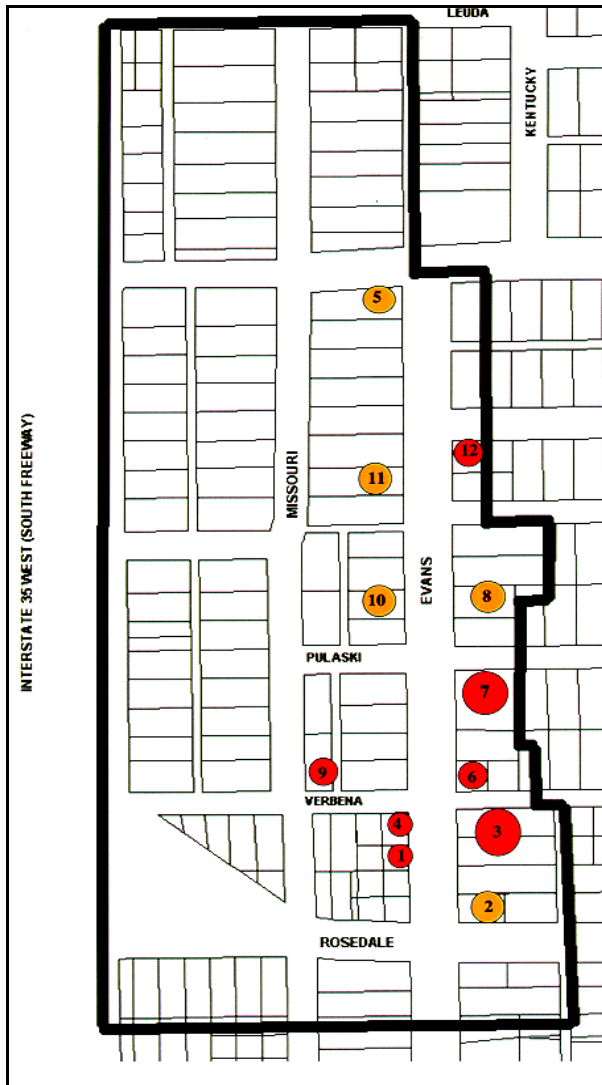


***Built in 1931, the Tommy Tucker Building, located at 801 Verbena Street, was formerly Our Mother of Mercy Catholic School.***



The historic and cultural preservation subcommittee developed the following strategies to preserve Evans & Rosedale's important architectural character:

- As part of the survey being conducted by Historic Fort Worth, Inc., perform a complete inventory of important businesses, homes of prominent people, and renowned architectural structures in the District.





- Showcase the District's place in Fort Worth history and culture by using certain structures as anchors in the overall redevelopment plan. The map to the left illustrates the location (by number) and preservation priority suggested for these buildings. They include: Dr. Harris building (1); Mount Zion Baptist Church (3); Sunshine Cumberland Presbyterian Church (4); the NAACP building (6); Federated Women's Club Home building (7); Tommy Tucker building (9); and the Compassionate Church of God In Christ building (12). High priority should be given to the preservation of these buildings.
- Future redevelopment efforts should determine the feasibility of preserving and/or reusing these additional structures: Lee Barber Shop (2); Imbers building (5); Miles/Dorsey Adams building (8); Sigma Gamma Rho building (10); and the Lucille Smith building (11). Medium priority may be given in to incorporating these structures into redevelopment efforts.

Priority Legend	Map	Building	Address
 High	1.	Dr. Harris Building	1108 Evans Avenue
	2.	Lee Barber Shop	901 East Rosedale Street
	3.	Mount Zion Baptist Church	101 Evans Avenue
 Medium	4.	Sunshine Cumberland Presbyterian Church Parsonage	1100 Evans Avenue
	5.	Imbers Building	1104 Evans Avenue
	6.	NAACP Building	900-902 Evans Avenue
	7.	Federated Women Club Home	1059 Evans Avenue
	8.	Miles/Dorsey Adams Building	1051 Evans Avenue
	9.	Tommy Tucker Building	1009 Evans Avenue
	10.	Sigma Gamma Rho Building	801 Verbena Street
	11.	Lucille Smith Building	1008 Evans Avenue
	12.	Compassionate Church of God In Christ	920 Evans Avenue
			951 Evans Avenue

(Source: Planning Department, 2000)

### **Historic and Cultural Uses**

The Evans & Rosedale District has beautiful historic buildings that have the potential for reuse. These architecturally significant structures could serve as tenant space for new businesses or services, drawing a wide range of customers and visitors. Additionally, some of these future uses would draw upon Evans & Rosedale's unique historic cultural and commercial importance.

The subcommittee recommends the following strategies to use the existing historic stock to highlight the District's defining place in Fort Worth's African-American culture and history:

- ❑ Future tenants in existing or new building stock should mirror popular business attractions that once flourished in the Evans & Rosedale area; jazz and blues venues that would attract national talent; and spaces for plaques or other tributes to the contributions of past educators and churches in the area.
- ❑ Attracting the following uses would tap into this district's historic and cultural significance: education; health; fraternal/business history; religion (tours of historic churches); and entertainment/music venues.
- ❑ Certain historic structures should be considered for specific functions for the District: Tommy Tucker building – visitor center/Tarrant County Black Historical & Genealogical Society; Lucille Smith building – restaurant; Sigma Gamma Rho building – youth center; and Imbers Building – small business incubator.

### **Signage and Monuments**

Signage and monuments can function as a device to help display the richness of this district's heritage, and draw the public into enjoying the urban streetscape, shops, entertainment attractions as well as purchasing services and goods. Information can be provided about the neighborhood in the form of maps or other markers that chronicle the people and history of the community. A signage program could be designed that establishes a recognizable graphic image for the Business and Cultural District. It is also recommended that directional signage be added on the major highways adjacent to the District that notify visitors and depict the area as an exciting and unique place, similar to other destinations in Fort Worth. Additionally, signage and improvements at the I-35W overpass, west of Evans & Rosedale, will improve access and visibility, and provide gateway opportunities.

The following strategies on use of signage and monuments are essential tools in underscoring the District's past milestones, highlighting cultural aspects of the district, and spurring economic activity:

- ❑ Use creative urban design techniques to utilize the overpass at East Rosedale Street and I-35W to serve as a gateway or signpost that directs people from the west to the District.
- ❑ Through creative urban design, link the eastside of I-35W to the westside of I-35W to build upon the market energy of Medical District and Downtown commerce.
- ❑ Mount plaques on each of the historically significant buildings to relate their importance to past events.
- ❑ Place way-finder signs at key locations throughout the city, such as I-35W.

- ❑ Consider erecting a monument or other tribute to African-American educators.
- ❑ Create banners and public art through competitions involving youth that feature Evans & Rosedale's unique place in African-American history and culture.

### **Next Steps**

Evans & Rosedale has the opportunity to grow and reestablish its past vibrancy. With its historic homes and businesses it can become successful like many other historic communities. Listed below are several implementation actions that could help make this vision a reality:

- ❑ Create a National Register District in Near Southeast Fort Worth using the Near Southeast historic resources survey conducted by Historic Fort Worth, Inc., and seek local landmark designation for district sites.
- ❑ Encourage community groups to conduct historical education workshops about the area.
- ❑ Seek funds and utilize incentives to assist property owners in renovating historic properties.
- ❑ Ensure that new development is compatible with the district's historic character.